

NATIONAL ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WEEK



WELLNESS WALK

CALGARY

Wellness Walk

Monday, November 16, 1998
Calgary Native Friendship Centre

11:00 a.m. - Kick Off

Route: Downtown, approximately 12 blocks.

Guest speakers
Free Lunch

Door prizes for
walk participants

For more information
contact NAS at
261-7945



11:00 a.m. - walk to Sacred Heart
Church of the First Peoples

11:30 a.m. - refreshments at Sacred Heart
Church of the First Peoples

For more information
contact Debbie or
Brenda
Nechi Institute -
Health Promotions
Division
460-4304

EDMONTON

10th Annual Walk Sober/ Join the Circle Rally

Monday, November 16, 1998
Edmonton City Hall Foyer
10:00 a.m. - official ceremonies and
circle ceremony
Entertainment

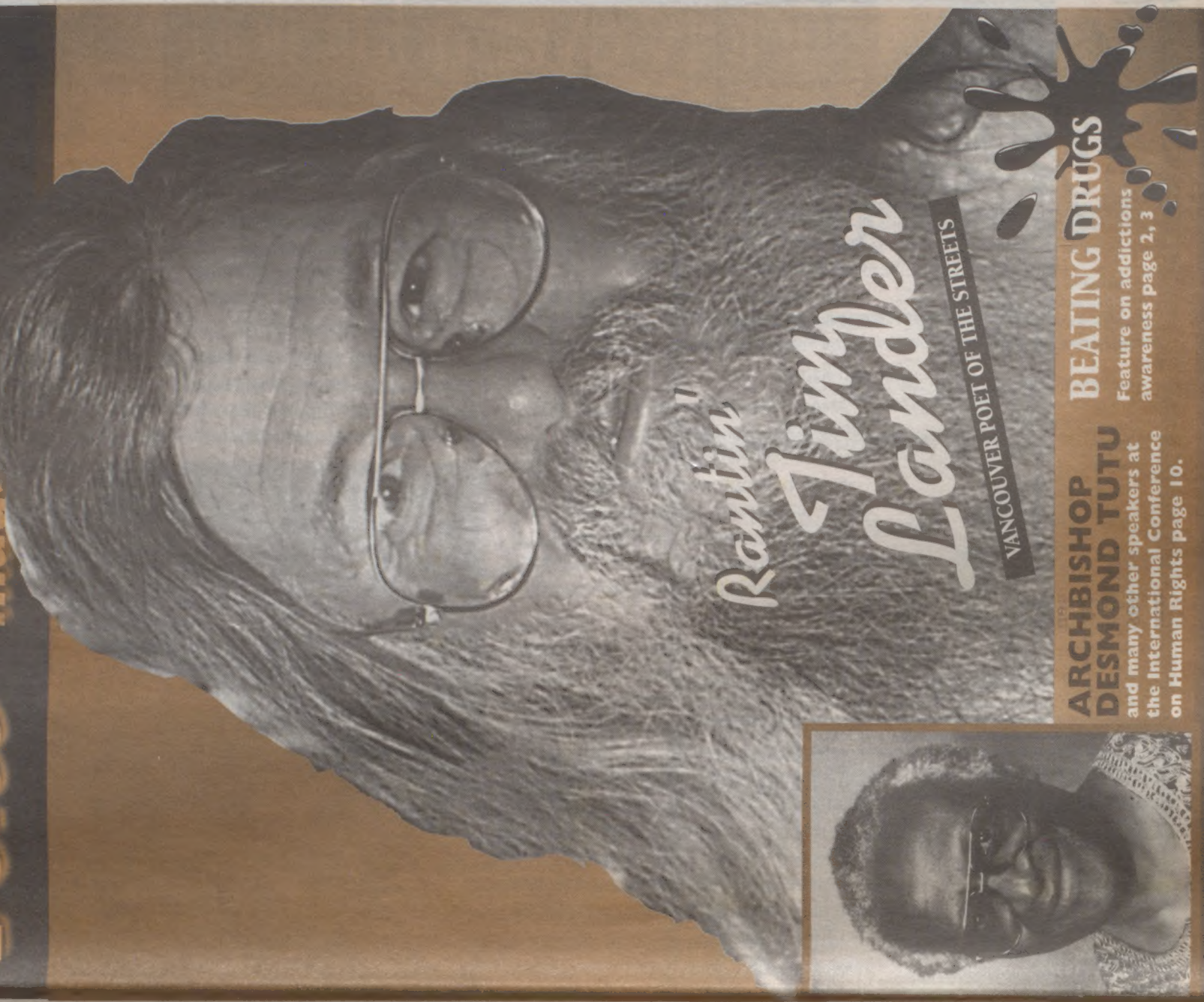
Asani

Red River Wheelers Métis
Cultural Dancers

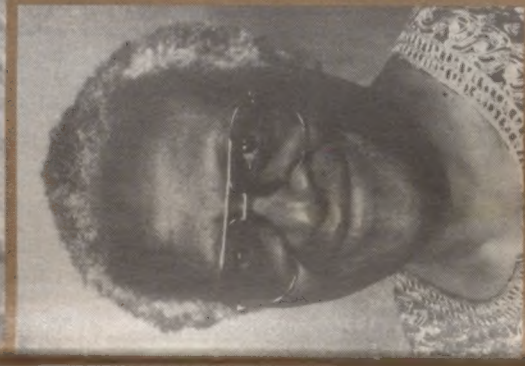
Special guest speaker
Ernie Pudwill

NOVEMBER 1998 Vol. 5 No. 11
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Our Voice the spare change magazine



Rantyn Lander
VANCOUVER POET OF THE STREETS



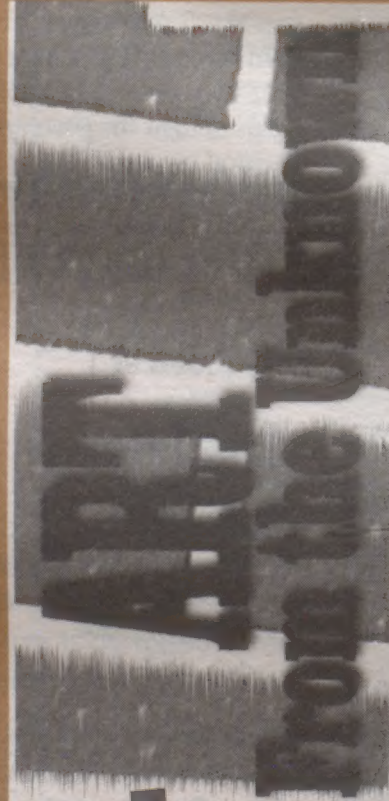
**ARCHBISHOP
DESMOND TUTU**
and many other speakers at
the International Conference
on Human Rights page 10.

BEATING DRUGS
Feature on addictions
awareness page 2, 3

Exhibit

December 18-21

CALL FOR ART



This 2nd annual art exhibit is being planned for artists on low incomes. This includes individuals who are on social assistance, welfare Canada disability pensions, unemployment insurance, or are currently un(der)employed. This exhibit will run December 18-21, 1998 in the Old Strathcona Arts Barns. It is intended

to be a risk free opportunity for low income artists to share their artwork with the broader community. It is also intended to raise awareness of poverty issues. This project is being organized by Raj Pannu the MLA for Edmonton Strathcona in conjunction with Our Voice, the spare change magazine and Poverty In Action.

Our Voice

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Edmonton City Centre Church
Corporation, Edmonton

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OUR VOICE is published to provide
an income opportunity for
economically marginalized people in
our society while communicating
about their issues to the public.

OUR VOICE is a NON-PROFIT
program that survives on vendors,
advertising contributions and Tax
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**NOVEMBER 1998
Vol. 5 No. 11**

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North American Street
Newspaper Association NASNA.

Victory over addiction

BY L.J. DOWLING

Gail Osback is living proof that
addictions can be beaten. On
December 3rd of this year she will
have been sober for six years.

Gail left home at the age of fourteen
and began drinking beer and smoking cig-
arettes. It gave her a feeling of security and
well-being.

Alcohol was always part of Gail's life.
"My mother eventually left my father
because of his heavy drinking," Gail said.
Gail was born into a family of nine chil-
dren. "Raising nine children made it diffi-
cult for my mother to meet the needs and
wants of each individual child." Her moth-
er often resorted to drinking as a way of
coping.

Gail had her first child at the age of sev-
enteen. She moved to a new town with her
spouse. During this period she did not
drink or take drugs as her husband forbade
it, even though he was using himself. He
abused her both physically and emotional-
ly. After the birth of her second son who
died tragically at the age of four months,
she moved back to the city where she
embarked upon a destructive path of injec-
tion drug use. This also led to prostitution.

While in the inner city, Gail met her
father and found him to be in very bad
health. Not long after he was found frozen
to death. Gail sank to her lowest point.
She moved in with a man who was a drug
user and she had two daughters with him.
Eventually her youngest daughter was
taken by child welfare and is still in their
custody. "I still do not have visitation
rights even though I have recovered from
drug use," Gail says. "I don't have the
funds to fight the government to have the
decision revoked."

Gail then met a man who
was singing gospel music on a
street corner.

"Without pressuring me or
judging me he befriended me
and introduced me to a different
lifestyle," Gail said. She became
involved in church activities.

Gail was not able to quit drugs and
booze cold turkey, but she gradually
weaned herself off. There were times when
she suffered such severe physical symp-



Gail belts out a song at a concert.

toms that she would have to find a fix.

"For me recovery consisted of con-
fronting the pain that led to the problem
in the first place," says Gail. "Falling off
the wagon several times is part of the
process."

BEATING DRUGS addictions awareness

The programs Gail took part in at Nechi
educated her about how drugs affect both
the body and the mind and helped teach
her "to know herself and love herself".

Her biggest fear when she quit using
was that she would not be accepted by
society, by her family or by her children.
She advises others not to have this fear.
She discovered that "there are always good
people who will accept you no matter who
you are or what you've done."

Gail completed her schooling through
the Ben Calf Robe School, the Alberta
Vocational College and the Native
Women's Pre-employment training pro-
gram.

She continued to volunteer at
Poundmaker's Lodge and eventually
became a paid employee working as a
night attendant. She has taken the com-
munity addictions program through the
Nechi Centre. She plans on taking the
addictions counselor program in January.

At times she is still confronted with
issues from her past, but she is now better
equipped to deal with them. She has no
desire to drink or to use drugs, even
though at times she gets frustrated with
government agencies which invade her
privacy by wanting to know her every
move.

"I have times when I struggle financial-
ly but I'm much happier to be free from
the shackles of addiction." ♦

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magazine

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site for people around the world to read a bit
about Alberta and people here.

Our Voice on the internet, our voice to the
world!

The WEB site is also a good place to email us
feedback about the magazine.

So check out **Our Voice** on the WEB.

[www.planet.eon.net/kwiley/
voicehome.html](http://www.planet.eon.net/kwiley/voicehome.html)

KIMBERLEY LANGFORD-FLUET

Mark Kozak once had a cocaine addiction that was costing him \$3,000 a day. Now he is a Public Education speaker with the Calgary office of the Alberta Seventh Step Society.

While in grade five Mark began to drink and smoke cigarettes. A year later, he was smoking drugs. Initially Mark used the drugs and alcohol out of curiosity, and as a way to fit in with others his age. It wasn't long after that "I found myself hanging around with the wrong crowd," he explains.

Many of these kids, like Mark, were from alcoholic homes.

Mark took a cue from one of his buddies who was stealing from his brother in order to buy his drugs, and began to steal from his own family and take part in break and enters.

While in the seventh grade Mark decided that marijuana wasn't giving him the high he needed and his new drugs of choice became acid, speed, mescaline and peyote.

It wasn't long before he found himself falling deeper and deeper into his addiction. "As the drugs got more expensive," he explained, "the crime got more extensive."

At the age of 30, his life of crime and abusing drugs came to an abrupt halt when he was sentenced to a 9 1/2 year prison term for a crime he did not commit. Mark was in a state of shock, "at first I thought that only happened in the movies," he paused, "but I wasn't sentenced -- I was rescued."

While he was awaiting sentencing and detained in Calgary's Remand Centre, Mark began to go through withdrawal. "It was excruciating," he said. A doctor visited him twice a day and gave him aspirin for the pain. It was during this time that Mark was first introduced to the Seventh Step program. The program is designed as a self-help program, working in the Criminal Justice System to help offenders change the attitudes that led them to live a life of crime.

During his incarceration at the Stony Mountain Penitentiary located outside of Winnipeg, Mark took the opportunity to reflect on who his friends really were. He began attending Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, and continued to participate in the Seventh Step Life skills program.

The Life skills program taught Mark to look at the positive things in life and build on these. He also

learned how to function in "normal" society.

He was released after serving 1/3 of his sentence. The first months of freedom were tough for Mark. Finding work proved to be more difficult than he imagined. Although he had tried school for two years while in prison, he found it to be an exercise in frustration. Years of drug abuse, he said, had "affected my head." Not only that but the abuse had taken its toll on his body as well. "I was screwed up physically and as a result can't do physical labour," he remarked. Career wise, Mark didn't have many options.

Mark was then encouraged to volunteer with the Seventh Step Society and his new life began. His work took him to the schools, where he told the students the truth about living a life of crime and what jail is really like. After giving about 10 presentations, he was offered a full-time job with the Public Education Department. That was nine years

ago. He considers it to be his lucky break as, "there's not too many jobs out there where a background like mine is a requirement."

His talks drive home, "how poor choices can direct a person's life." Mark stressed, "there's nothing hard about living a criminal lifestyle. It's getting an education, a job and raising a family that is the tough way. This is hard and these are the people I used to scoff at." He added that all the people he once viewed as the losers in life are really the winners and all the people he viewed as the winners are losers -- and are now either dead or in jail.

While still in prison inmates can participate in the weekly Seventh Step meetings. Once they've been released they usually end up at the CRC Halfway house where they are assigned a Parole officer and expected to

find a job. They must also take a Responsibility course. Calgary's CRC house was the first of its kind in Canada to be built as a halfway house. On July 3rd of this year it celebrated its 21st anniversary. It is home to 41 people and is a co-ed facility. The house has just undergone renovations and is now "handicapped accessible."

The Society also offers street meetings that are attended by people from all walks of life.

"The program's success rate is pretty hard to measure," Mark said, "If people stay involved with the program and we can stay in touch, it's very high." Yet he also sees a lot of people drifting away and ending up back in prison.

When asked what he would tell someone who came to him for advice about a drug or alcohol addiction, Mark said he'd tell them to get some

help. "It's pretty tough to do it by yourself," he added. If they are not Seventh Step material he'd try to steer them to other agencies that help people with their addictions.

If you'd like to find out more about the Seventh Step program, please call (403) 228-7778. ♦

Alberta Seventh Step Society Mark Kozak's story



**BEATING
DRUGS**
Feature on addictions
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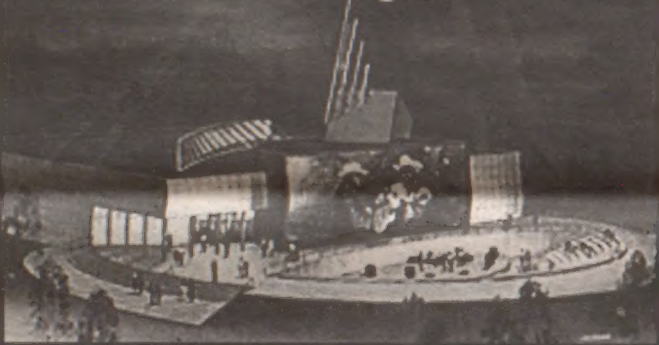
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OPINION

Getting a job has a higher priority

BY R.H. MACLACHLAN

Recently I've been reading some of the literature and listening to some ideas put forward by the anti-poverty advocacy groups and poverty self-help groups.

The message I'm getting is that the objects and aims of these organizations are to make "living in poverty" a bit more comfortable.

I don't buy it.

The last thing I'm interested in is making the POVERTY SUB CULTURE more livable—and I'm living so far below the so-called "poverty line" that on a clear day I need an astronomical telescope to see it.

My ambition is to get out of the poverty sub-culture — assuming I'm even part of it.

Poverty has little, if anything, to do with how much money you have or don't have. It has everything to do with your outlook on life and how you choose to live your life.

For example, I have no idea where the Boyle Street Co-op is located, nor do I want to know. I've been to the Bissell Centre maybe five times, because I had specific people to see, not to "hang out" in the drop-in. I've never bought anything in a second-hand store or thrift shop. I have a vague idea—but only a vague idea—where the Food Bank is located. I wouldn't have a clue which inner-city churches serve suppers, or when. I have no idea how to contact the Inner-City Support Network, nor do I need to. The list is endless.

So, you ask, how do you survive on an income Statistics Canada says is about half of what you should have, particularly when over half of it goes to rent and utilities?

I not only survive, but I live quite comfortably, because when I was a middle-class person I established certain human skills people which people who claim to be trapped in the "poverty cycle" never do. The most important is a sense of self-discipline which enables me to actually live below my means, limited as they are. In other words I have developed the ability to distinguish necessities from luxuries, and to go without those things which I can clearly get along without—even some of those things anti-poverty advocates (who have never experienced it) will tell the world I absolutely should have.

If I may offer a small example. Sometimes I've had the choice of paying for a fax to send a job application or paying for a couple of day's food until payday. I opt for the fax every time. Going hungry for a couple of days is bearable considering getting a job has a much higher priority.

So maybe I'm stupid. Maybe I could go someplace and get something to eat for those two days. But if I did so, and did it too often I would feel this attitude of despair that is prevalent in the low-income community begin to rub off on me, and I gradually would feel myself being "sucked in" to that way of life.

Sorry. I plan to be a winner and winners don't hang around losers. So don't ask me to be part of your community, even though I live there. ♦

Charlie Meadows says... Canada turning into a bad Fox sitcom

Once again the voice of the people has spoken, and Bill Smith has been returned to power as Mayor of Edmonton.

Question: Are we suckers? How did Bill Smith get a reputation for moderation, especially after he told challenger Tooker Gomborg to "go back to Cuba" during a debate. Now, granted Tooker can be as wacky as the next guy, it's still a sign of what era Smith's brain is stuck in that he can none too subtly accuse Tooker of being a communist. Presumably, the next step Smith will take will be to install the "are you now or have you ever been" oath at city hall.

And as a measure of what Bill had to go up against in his quest for city hall, his opponents either a) accidentally handcuffed themselves to a building (Mike Nickel)

or b) Cheryl Shumacher didn't seem to be running for mayor so much as providing bizarre quotes for the media, and Ihor Broda just didn't seem to see it as a competition. Too bad these "candidates" didn't humiliate themselves in some horrifying way, perhaps by running a commando raid on Bill Smith's \$50,000 car bought at city expense.

Further proof that Canada has turned into a bad Fox sitcom: During the aftermath of the APEC conference, with various political hacks having a field day being shocked about events, the normally law-and-order Reform Party came to the defense of the various "activists, social malcontents and communists" involved in the demonstrations, accusing Jean Chretien and his Liberal ministers of brutality, insensitivity, and trampling on human rights. No argument there; but

how can anybody take this from the Reform Party, especially from Preston Manning, who seems to have based his entire political philosophy on some unholy cross between Benito Mussolini and Anita Bryant? The Reform Party defending human rights? Does the phrase "physician, heal thyself" spring to mind? Oh well, at least he wasn't quoted as saying "Instead of taking baseball bats or something else, now police are trying to have more civilized methods" (about the pepper spray) as Chretien was. Gee, thanks, Mr. Prime Minister. We should also be very thankful that public floggings have been disallowed, too. ♦

Our Voice provides a free forum for opinion. Views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the position of Our Voice, its editors or publishers.

Homeless problem simple

The solution is a little bit harder

The government of Alberta recently launched a \$50,000 inquiry into why there will be so many homeless people this winter. Here's the \$50,000 answer: people can't afford homes.

Do the math. If you're earning the minimum wage (now boosted to \$5.40 an hour) and work even a 45 hour week, that's about \$1093 a month, or say \$900 "take home" because, even at that wage, you are expected to pay taxes. Rent: \$450, phone & utilities \$150, food \$250, clothes \$50. That's \$900 there. Add some frills: a car, occasional movie rentals, even a little spending money, you are way over.

Add children to the equation. You won't make it.

Try it on welfare: \$390 for a single person. \$1200 for a family. You won't make it.

The crisis isn't always as obvious as it seems though. For every person in a shelter, or crawled behind a dumpster, there's a whole family crowded in back home with mom and dad. There's another family with the credit card maxed out, the bank calling, utilities about to be cut, and a lot of tension in the kitchen.

It's not just an emergency crisis, although increasingly the emergency shelters have to accommodate families and children. In Calgary, they've already opened a barracks for housing after a study found that many people with jobs couldn't afford a home.

There's a tremendous influx of job seekers coming to the province, as many as a city of Red Deer's worth of people last year. Finding a job is one thing, finding a home you can afford, is another. In Edmonton the vacancy rate is falling to what some say will be below one per cent by Christmas. That is virtually full. And rental prices are rising accordingly.

The problem isn't limited to Alberta. Anne Golden chaired a Toronto task force on housing which found that 106,000 households in that city are at risk of losing their home because they pay more than half their income in rent.

Golden points out that the marketplace can't build affordable housing. With the price of land and construction costs, it isn't profitable. New apartments or condos are way out of the reach of too many people. She describes the housing problem as a national crisis, and a crisis that the market cannot solve.

Clearly governments must intervene in housing, and most housing authorities say it has to come first from the federal government, the only one with the money to make a real impact. But the federal government is getting out of housing as fast as it can, shifting all the responsibility to the provinces and cities. Since 1993 the government has completely shut down any new money for what is called "social" housing.

The provincial government has had a small housing subsidy program. For some families who can't make the rent, the government pays the difference between 25 per cent of their income and the market rent rate. But it's a lot of red tape for building owners, and when the vacancy rates are so low, and rents rising, it's easier just to get the cash each month.

In Edmonton there are about 4,000 homes available with some subsidy through the city. But no new homes have been added in years, the waiting lists are long, and the rents are still usually over \$500 a month.

More emergency shelters won't solve a deep-seated problem. The lack of affordable housing, and rising rates of people living in their cars, bunking in with friends or surviving somehow will continue. Housing is a Canadian crisis we are going to hear a lot more about in the coming years unless government moves on it, fast and in a big way.

Keith Wiley

Editorial OPINION

Our Voice the spare change magazine

Time to put your money where your mouths are

Last month in **Our Voice** we did a story showing some of the personal tragedies caused by VLT's. On October 19, a fraction over half of the people in Alberta who voted, voted to keep VLTs in our communities. We at **Our Voice** left no doubt that we were against the machines that cause so many people to become addicted. The vote was close, pretty much 50/50 all over Alberta, but it looks like video lottery is here to stay, at least for now.

Prior to the election both anti and pro VLT organizations presented strong views about the issue. The side against the machines expressed primary concerns regarding the detriment they were having on people. "They are destroying lives and families. The proof is there. There is no question." This reality will need on-going attention. People are addicted and families and lives are suffering and this must be dealt with. Our fellow citizens will continue to be addicted and more will become addicted. There seems to be little room for preventative medicine in this case and those who work with problem gamblers will have to react to these tragedies as best as they can.

The pro-VLT side's take on the issue wasn't so much about freedom of choice as it was about threats. They had the bank account to run a major ad campaign saying things like, "without VLT revenue, important community initiatives and charities that help the needy will suffer. By voting against VLT's you are taking money away from the people who need it most; the poor and the disadvantaged."

Approximately 85 percent of all VLT revenue in the past has gone right to the provincial government's general revenues and the remaining 15 percent stayed with the operators; bar owners and such. We of course all know about this government's policies on giving money to the poor. It's not all that important to them. They seem more than able to spend Alberta's money on people who are already wealthy. As for the bar and hotel owners, they as well should be called to task on how much money they actually contribute to causes that are aimed at helping people. It would be interesting to see just how generous they have been and intend to be.

The VLTs are here to stay and according to the pro side's campaign, the money will go to areas of our community that need it the most. So let's hope that it's more than a bunch of talk. It's time for the government and the hospitality industry to put their money where their mouths are.

Michael Walters

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I'M IN CHARGE 'ROUND 'ERE!



AND "LE CHEF" SHOWS HIS RESPECT FOR
FREE SPEECH IN THE NORMAL MANNER...

Rantin' Tim Lander staying close to the street

BY TOM MURRAY

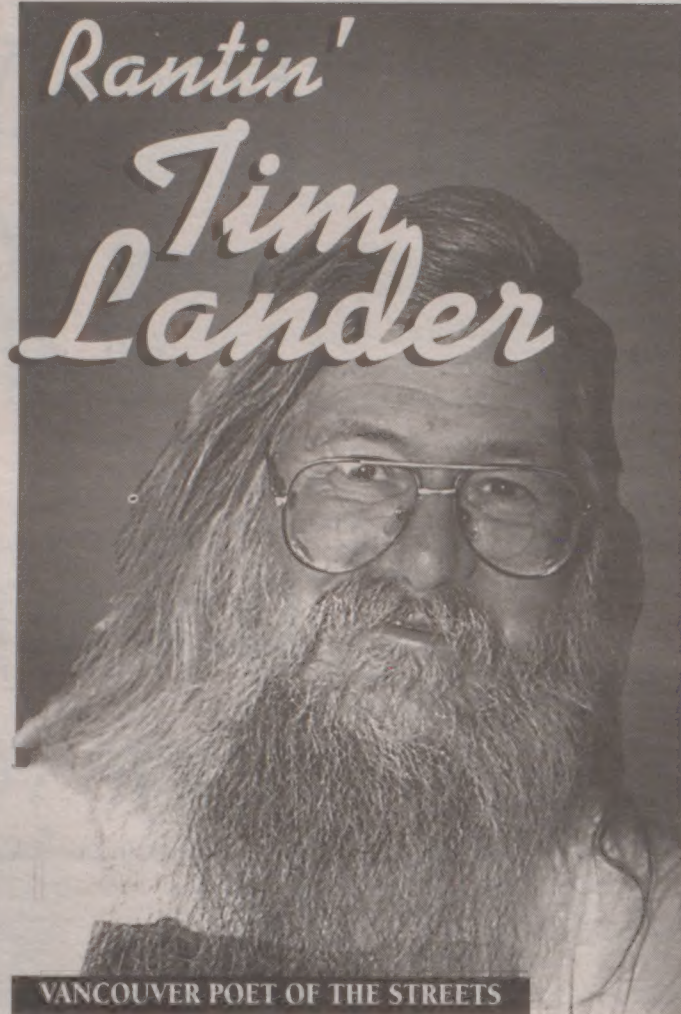
After his kick off reading for the Stroll of Poets, where he electrified an audience of fellow poets and poetry lovers, Tim Lander talked with Our Voice writer Tom Murray talked at the Two Rooms cafe on Whyte.

Tim Lander is a poet of the streets. Unlike ivory tower writers, Tim's experience as a poet is immediate and direct, made up from his life in and around the inner city in Vancouver. He plays the penny whistle for upwards of six hours a day to supplement his small earnings, and he prepares and carefully binds small chap books of poetry that are very much concerned with the here and now.

Physically, he's a large, rumped bear of a man with long white hair and beard, looking sort of like Robertson Davies if he just didn't give a damn.

Lander was willing to confess to the secrets of the street performer. He rhapsodized about the freedom of poverty and preached the gospel of hand crafted poetry chap books. "I think that all poets should make chap books, they're really cheap. You don't have to hang around waiting two years for a book to appear. When poets meet each other they can pull out chap books as business cards." He produces maybe 50 to 100 at a time, usually photocopied down at the local Office Depot. He believes that this is the best way to get poetry out, as a way to galvanize the poetry community. These small books are a reaction to his frustration with the literary establishment, and the Canadian grants system that turns its nose up at Lander's hand stitched, carefully turned out books. Tim takes as much time with the look of the books as he does with the actual poetry.

There is character to his writing, and a lot of feeling in his style. "Most of the poetry in my chap books is handwritten, and I find that very helpful, because handwriting is like *Our Voice*, sometimes you write clearer, or larger, sometimes



ago, I would dance for you'."

During his reading at the Old Strathcona Legion, he produced the penny whistle to play small parts before and after each poem. This simultaneously defuses any pretention that might arise during his more serious poems, and adds a splash of colour.

While Lander's concerns are very much that of a humanist, he says "I'm not a political activist, but as far as I'm concerned, producing chapbooks, and I'm a real proselytiser for self publishing, is a real political act. Just seeing how much the hierarchy is down on this. And the facilities are so cheap, and easy to use."

Tim has often been referred to as "ranting" Tim Lander. His performance at the Stroll of Poets kick off party was by turns funny, provocative and insightful, but he never really ranted. "Maybe I ranted more when I was younger. My personal philosophy is -Do it all. Do it now. Don't put it off. Don't let anyone put you down." Then a pause.

"What I really believe in is the idea of having fun!" ♦

What gives me gas

Jason Blacker in Calgary
hates his utility bill

I've recently begun to pay for utilities. Before July I always lived in rentals where utilities were included. Let me express my surprise when I received my first gas bill and realized to what extent I was being scammed.

Of my fifty dollar bill, more than half (\$28) was being taken up by administration fees. Not only that, but this administration fee was for a full two months, not just the month and a half I'd been living at my present address.

My pleas and cries for justice fell upon deaf ears at Canadian Western Natural Gas (CWNG). The peon with whom I spoke, who probably barely makes a dime more than minimum wage, assured me that I wasn't being scammed, but that my bill runs from the middle of one month to the middle of the next. In other words, even though I didn't live in my present home for the first half of the July, CWNG still felt obliged to charge me for the administration fees for that time.

Originally CWNG also wanted a \$250 deposit seeing that I was a new customer, until a credit check breathed me clear of that obstacle. Not only do we as consumers have no other choice as to our heat, but we have to pay what the market dictates or what CWNG feels they can get away with. This reeks of injustice, when a private company can get away with what amounts to daylight robbery. There seems to be little risk for CWNG, charging outrageous deposits and securing extra cash through ubiquitous administration fees. Yet this company dictates whether you and I will go warm or cold during our harsh Canadian winters. What about those folks who have a bit of bad credit, and there is no shortage of those around, and can't afford the large deposit? Do they and their children suffer the cold in the winter? It would seem like it.

I, like many of us, am environmentally conscious, but I am financially conscious as well, owing to limited means. So I do my best to keep my resources to a minimum. I only wash dishes in cold water, I shower quickly and keep the heat down in the winter. Yet half of my bill I have no control over. This maddens me.

CWNG is a private company and it astounds me that our public and communal resources are being controlled by a few individuals beholden to no one

except themselves. Let's look no further than New Zealand where after the government privatized the utilities, a number of cities suffered long and harsh blackouts.

CWNG is part of Canadian Utilities, which is part of a parent company ATCO, a huge multi-national corporation. Now CWNG being a "private" private company wouldn't give me any information on their profits last year. However, with a bit of research, I found that Canadian Utilities, which includes CWNG, made a profit of \$180 million last year alone. Now CWNG has approximately 367,000 customers south of Red Deer. A little math tells me that giving back the administration fee would be a paltry \$5 million.

Now after all I've said, you still might be wondering why CWNG wouldn't cancel their ridiculous administration fee. Well, consider how ATCO did last year. They had an increase of 11 per cent per share, up \$2.68. Reminds me of the banks. (déjà vu?)

Answer me this if you will. Is ATCO, and therefore CWNG, in business to keep people warm (a necessity) or are they into making a profit for themselves and their shareholders? The answer is obvious. ♦

Jason received the numbers he used from the W.R. Castell Library (The Business and Career Section) in Calgary.

OPINION

A little money does a lot of good.... for health

BY LINDA DUMONT

Health can mean different things to different people. That's why Action for Healthy Communities gives people the freedom to decide for themselves what will make them feel healthy, then helps to put those ideas into action.

"It can be anything that affects their well being on a day to day basis," said Coordinator Mary Gallivan, "It is an opportunity for people to define what health means and to take action to address issues affecting health."

AHC started in 1994 in response to the cutbacks and changes to the health-care system in the fall of 1993. The people who were most affected by the changes had the least say, and lived in the least healthy communities. To improve community health, AHC gives grants of up to \$1000 to put ideas into action.

Gallivan has lived in McCauley for 20 years. She has worked with AHC for a year, and is enthusiastic about her work.

"There is an incredibly rich layer of resources in the people here," she said, "This project really taps into that."

Gallivan said AHC has helped 65 projects in the central communities. Some required very little money to get started, as little as \$67.

Projects include collective kitchens, the LETS system of bartering, sewing lessons for new Canadians, Chinese seniors' foot care, upgrading for the computer at the Boyle McCauley News, self defense for junior high girls, children's hygiene projects, and the Poverty in Action conference video. Some are more successful than others, but it is hard to measure success.

Pollyanna Kwong from the Chinese Community Services said the foot care program was started a few years ago, with AHC as one of the sponsors, to help seniors at the Chinese seniors mansion. A nurse comes in weekly, but most seniors only participate once a month.



Mary Gallivan coordinates the Action for Healthy Communities project
PHOTO Linda Dumont

"They do things like polish nails and removing corns," said Kwong. A \$100 grant from AHC paid for an instructor to teach self defense at McCauley School. Fifteen people participated.

"The reason we had the self defense classes is we are aware that a lot of women and junior high girls were feeling unsafe. They learned a few self protection techniques and felt a little more safe," said Del Collins, president of the McCauley Parents' Association.

The inner city poetry night and the publication of Songs of the Street 3 were both partially funded by AHC grants. "Often having the opportunity to use their skills in a positive way gives people confidence. It's a positive experience that makes them want to do other things," said Gallivan, "I've seen people get involved in a project supported by us, and then get involved in other things."

The most important feature of AHC is that the ideas and action for improving community health come from the community residents. To get a project started, a group of at least three people have to identify a health issue in the community and come up with a project. At the end of the project, they evaluate its impact on the community.

"It really weaves the fabric of the community tighter and stronger," said Gallivan. ♦

WORD ON THE STREET

Gang beating leaves my friend unable to work

BY DONNA FROESE

They knocked Art down and started beating him. They left him unconscious and stole his lunch, water bottle, coffee cup, zippo lighter and the face of his watch. They also took his day planner and the four dollars he was carrying.

Art was on his way to Labour Ready, looking to be sent to work. He was walking on to 116th Avenue when five guys jumped him. It was around 4:30 a.m. Art tried to tell them that he was on his way to work, but the gang didn't care. They just started beating him. No one in the area came out to see what was happening.

Art returned home at 4:45. I came to the door to see a lot of blood coming out of his nose and that he was holding his left shoulder.

We notified the police and they found his day planner on the side of the road and that was all. They asked him a lot of questions before they called for an ambulance to take him to the hospital.

The Doctor couldn't do anything for Art's nose because of how swollen it was. They gave him a card to see a plastic surgeon after the swelling went down. Art still couldn't breathe through the right side of his nose. He was then told he would have to see a specialist about his nose as well.

Then Art went to our family doctor about his shoulder. They discovered that the bone was sticking up about an inch. There was definitely something wrong.

Art has since been unable to work and has been forced to Social Services for some temporary income in place of the money he was making before.

There are still quite a few doctors appointments for Art to go through. The damage that those guys did to him could have been a lot worse than it was. Art is still in lot of pain. He still can't breathe through his nose very well or lay on his left side. All the Police will say is that it is gang related. ♦

Rafiki!

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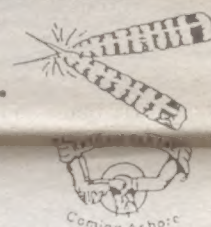
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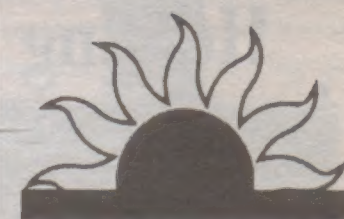
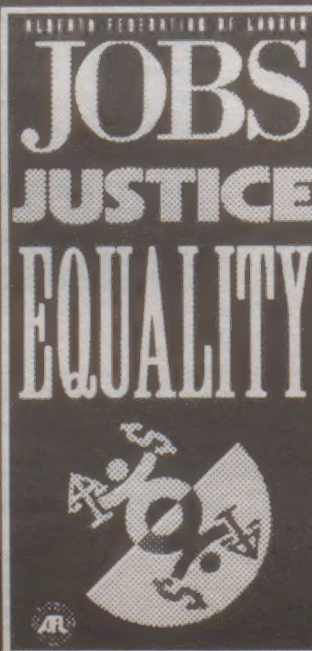
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FUN AT THE POOR PEOPLES' CONFERENCE

BY KASANDRA CALDWELL

I am a poor person. My good shoes are wearing out, and I have no money to replace them. I am on a Canada Pension Plan disability pension (CPP) and on Alberta's Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). While I do sell "Our Voice" magazine for extra money, together, they are not enough to pay my basic expenses. I used to earn \$65,000 a year, and it is pretty embarrassing to ask for handouts. I was most always a poor and disadvantaged person. I was raised in a poor, uneducated Metis family. We were the working poor. Ever since I can remember, I was a low-energy child. Over the years, the fatigue got worse, not better. There was a brief period of relative prosperity between ages 30 and 40, but since then I have not been able to work. All my life, I have either been an activist, or have depended on other activists to help me make a living. Recently, I did have a successful operation for sleep apnea, and my energy and mental health are increasing.

This allowed me to attend the 1998 Western Canada Poor Peoples' Conference in Regina, Saskatchewan, with a sense of excitement. It was organized by the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry. I expected to hear from poverty agencies about how they handled the poor. I also knew there would be a lot of plain poor people there and the focus would be on them.

The questions that the poor people asked were: "How can I make ends meet? How can I have a surplus, even though I am a charity case? How can I get more money?"

Most of the poor people at the Poor Peoples' Conference had mental and physical problems, but

they were tremendous. They spoke out about the plight of all the people they knew who live in poverty. Their hardship and low status made their words all the more eloquent.

The conference activists reminded me of my youthful days in the 1960's, when I worked in the inner city of Edmonton to help street people. In the 1960's, it was the middle class of North America, mainly volunteers from Christian churches, as well as students, who rose up and demanded that we aspire to our highest ideals and truly support the poor and oppressed. They traveled around Canada, educating the poor not only about the political system, but also methods with which to fight their own battles; hence the sudden popularity of protest marches, boycotts, and so on. It was the churches, also, who provided the money for the early activist and "grassroots" political activities.

Due to community agitation, the poor peoples' movement of the 1960's in Canada got so strong that it led to the release of government money to fund it. Democracy and the poor thrived. Most poverty incomes went up to meet the poverty line.

Then, in the 1970's, a backlash ensued. The new philosophy was to keep the poor helpless. Yes, there was adequate money to live on, but none to help the disadvantaged to speak out. Now it was social workers who were taking care of the poor, not the poor taking care of themselves.

In the 1980's the poor got a rude awakening. They no longer spoke out, but their incomes fell. Social workers who did speak out were also hushed by government. Churches and individuals no longer funded community activists. After all, weren't the poor being taken care of? Democracy died.

Finally, though, in the mid-1990's, church groups began listening to the poor, and began reluctantly to again fund community activists. At the Western Canada Poor Peoples' Conference in



KASANDRA CALDWELL (TOP CENTRE) WITH FRIENDS AT THE WESTERN CANADA POOR PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE. LEFT: CONFERENCE ORGANIZER BONNIE MORTON.



Regina, on October 15-18, 1998, it was the Students' Union at the University of Regina that donated their conference room, as well as breakfast and an inexpensive lunch for the attendees. It was by far the church groups and individuals who sponsored the attendees, not the government. Democracy is thriving again.

One speaker reminded us that we, the poor, are as good as anyone else. We do not have to feel ashamed of being imperfect humans. We have a right to speak out. We should speak out at all costs, even if it comes out garbled because we are physically or mentally disabled.

On Saturday night we attended the conference banquet. A plain, but good meal was served by the people who owned our hotel. There were speeches of thank you and good will and finally the entertainment. A troop of mentally handicapped players performed labour songs, folk songs, aboriginal songs, and skits portraying the everyday life of the oppressed.

Among us poor, there was a spirit of common purpose and love for ourselves. I felt as close to a group of strangers as I have ever felt. ♦

MOTIONS FOR LOCAL ACTION WESTERN CANADA POOR PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE

1. That this conference request that the federal and provincial finance ministers meet within the next twelve months, to close loopholes which allow the rich to get away with not paying their fair share of income tax. This issue must be dealt with as being a national crisis.
2. That this conference appoint a media co-ordinator from each agency at the conference to send articles and information to the newsletter of the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) to speak for the poor.
3. That this conference call for legislation to reinstate national standards and guidelines along the lines of Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), which was eliminated in 1996.
4. That the people at the conference send a copy of their personal budget to their Member of Parliament, Member of the Legislative Assembly, or civic official.
5. That this conference endorse an adequate Guaranteed Annual Income for persons with disabilities.
6. That this conference endorse the immediate creation of a federal ministry of affordable and safe housing for all Canadians.
7. That this conference oppose the implementation of a "social union", which would eliminate national standards, between the provinces.
8. Whereas families are being forced into low-income jobs, because of cutbacks and welfare restructuring, and their children must be placed in dockers, we move that there be a lobby for parental allowances and ability for families to receive subsidy monies to care for children in the home.
9. That anybody dealing with the setting of national standards should have a representative from the welfare or disabled community.

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A "Concert"-ed effort for Rwanda

Benefit for grassroots aid

Rafiki!



BY HEATHER SLADE

"1,000,000 DEAD IN ETHNIC WARS IN RWANDA," shouted the headlines of 1994. And to most people this was nothing more than news, tragic, but far removed from everyday life. There were those, however, who felt an unavoidable emotional attachment to these people half-way around the globe.

One of them was Leo Campos, himself a survivor of political repression in his native Chile. He happened to watch a CBC show on the aftermath of the civil war, and felt inspired to act. He was not alone in his compassion. In fact, large international aid organizations were doing all they could to support the rebuilding of Rwanda. But on a local scale, a lot more needed to be done. At this juncture, Leo sought the assistance from local humanitarian agencies to put him in touch with Rwandans here in the Edmonton area.

He learned of a grass-roots group called RAFIKI (Swahili for friendship). One of the

founders was a woman from Rwanda: Nathalie Uwantege. She had worked with peace and international aid organizations in Rwanda, and had lived under the conditions that caused her country to erupt into a bloody massacre of neighbors against each other. Her work in RAFIKI reflects her belief in human rights and racial equality.

With the newfound insight from his contacts, Leo was inspired to spearhead an artistic venue to benefit Rwanda. Sticks & Stones is the band in which Leo plays percussion, they, of course, would be involved, but others were also needed. Musicians and artists with messages about human dignity were needed. Three other local artists were found who fit the bill: Wendy McNeil, Minister Faust, and Mike Sadava.

It is all coming together in the form of a benefit concert in support of community projects in Rwanda. The tickets are only \$12 and can be purchased at the door or by calling 475-7729 or 439-9627. The event will be held Saturday, Nov. 28 at the City Media Club at 6005-103 St. The doors open at 8 pm; the show begins at 9. ♦

The MAI is "NAFTA on steroids"

Dale Ladouceur takes a look at the "secret" trade agreement

BY DALE LADOUCEUR

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment has been called 'NAFTA on steroids' for good reason. All the powers that NAFTA gave corporations is nothing in comparison to the sweeping powers that the MAI is suggesting.

The Multilateral Agreement on Investment was born three years ago by 29 of the world's richest nations. They belong to a branch of the World Trade Organization, (WTO), called the OECD. The MAI is a complex treaty designed to clear national trade barriers. The idea behind global trade is positive but the way the MAI is written and the way it was put together is less than desirable to the average citizen. The North American Free Trade Agreement was the first of a 'new breed' of investment treaties. Along with giving corporations far more legal power and muscle, NAFTA allows corporations to sue governments directly. So instead of having to talk their own government into suing another government over a trade dispute, corporations now have the power to haul any government into court.

This just happened to our government over a dispute about a gasoline additive called MMT. U.S. owned Ethyl Corp got about \$20 million because our government said the fuel additive was dangerous to

humans and the environment. A secret tribunal was set up and they decided in favour of the U.S. corporation. Now Environment Minister Christine Stewart says there was "insufficient evidence to base a clear case".

The MAI would give corporations equal legal power with nation states.

The MAI would give corporations even more clout. It would give corporations equal legal power with nation states. It would prevent Canadian companies from hiring Canadians first. Our government would not be able to sue a foreign company for breaking Canadian labour laws, environmental laws, or consumer laws. If the city, province, or federal government tried to enforce our own laws regarding these issues, the corporations could sue our government.

Foreign companies could also take control of local

water and sewer systems if they were privatized. EPCOR has already announced that it will consider privatization in the year 2000. When Britain privatized their water a few years ago the cost of water increased by 300%. Now the average Brit cannot afford safe water to drink.

People who support the MAI say it would encourage trade but the secrecy surrounding the MAI is cause for concern.

The OECD met in secret and negotiated most of the MAI text for two years in a Paris office before someone smuggled out a copy of the text and released it to the Globe and Mail last year. Since then, groups like the Council of Canadians have kept it in the press but they have had to struggle with the daily newspapers across the country. The same is true all over the world with special interest groups fighting to get the whole truth about the MAI to the people.

If you want to learn more about the MAI you can get information from the library. They have a copy of the actual text. The Parkland Institute, (492 8558), (www.ualberta.ca/parkland) is also a great source of info and can mail you pamphlets that give a summary on the MAI. You can also attend a meeting that will be held November 12 - 14 and ask any questions then.

Remember that an informed citizen is a powerful citizen. To make sure that YOUR government works for YOU you must arm yourself with knowledge. ♦

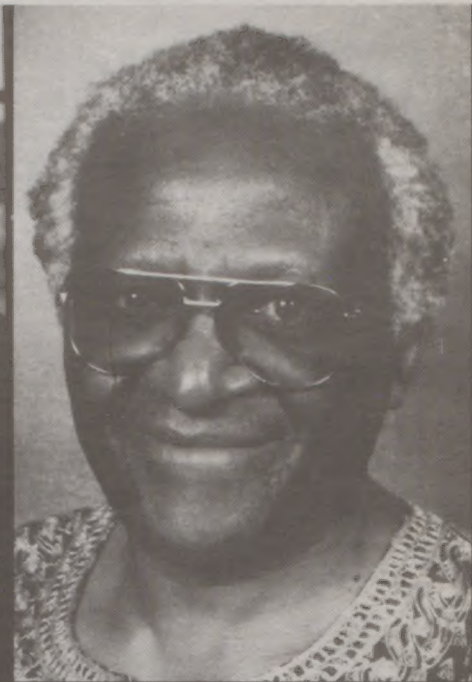
International Human Rights Conference celebrates 50 years of signing of Declaration



Mary Robinson,
former president of Ireland



Antonio Lamer
Chief Justice of Canada



SOME OF THE CONFERENCE'S HIGH
PROFILE SPEAKERS

Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

BY DALE
LADOUCEUR

From November 26-28th, Edmonton will host world human rights leaders to celebrate and review the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, signed 50 years ago. The conference, called "Universal Rights and Human Values: A Blueprint For Peace, Justice and Freedom", is bringing some high-profile speakers to lecture on a variety of issues. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond M. Tutu, former president of Ireland Mary Robinson, and Antonio Lamer the Chief Justice of Canada are just a few of the speakers.

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Held at the Sheraton Grande Hotel, the conference will cover three days filled with lectures and forums on every topic of human rights. Thursday night will be the welcoming speeches and an overview lecture of the Declaration with Anne McLellan,

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Twilight Retreat for AA and AlAnon

Nov. 12, (Step 3) Dec. 10, (Step 4)
(Also scheduled for Feb. 4, Mar 4 and Apr 8)
7 - 9:30 PM

This program is for men and women in AA or AlAnon who are looking for a spiritual path to strengthen their sobriety and enrich their serenity. These retreat evenings complement and help integrate work with the 12 step programs. The evenings include relaxation, meditation, input, time for reflection, sharing (optional) and prayer. Cost: 7th Tradition
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Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The conference is being sponsored by the Canadian Human Rights Foundation and the University of Alberta as part of worldwide celebrations to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration.

Over the following two days the lectures will cover as diverse topics as "The Challenge of Different Cultures and Religions", "The Economy, the Environment, and Human Rights", "Global Security: The Case for Disarmament" and "Human Rights and Transnational Corporations". There is also a Youth Conference titled "Leaders of Tomorrow - Awakening the World to Human Rights".

Even though Canada has been named 'best country in the world' for the fifth year in a row, it has some explaining to do. The UN committee that reviews compliance with the international agreement gave Ottawa 81 questions that it wants answered regarding the state of poverty and unemployment.

The committee on economic, social and cultural rights has asked Canada to explain a rise in child poverty, the big decline in the number of people receiving unemployment benefits, the doubling of food bank usage and many others.

It will be interesting to see how Ottawa explains how 83% of unemployed workers received benefits in 1990 and only 43% received in 1997. The UN question is asking: Have the changes in the EI program disproportionately affected vulnerable groups in Canada?

How will the Federal Government answer how food bank use has doubled in the last 10 years. The UN question asked "Does the government consider the need for food banks in so affluent a country as Canada consistent with Article 11 of the Covenant?"

According to the 1996 Report of the National Council of Welfare, 91% of families led by single-parent mothers under 25 live in poverty. Child poverty is at a 17-year high of 20.9%, meaning that nearly 1.5 million children live in poverty in Canada. The committee wants Ottawa to provide the most up-to-date information on single parents, children, people with disabilities and aboriginal people and explain how this unacceptable situation has been allowed to occur.

The UN committee also received information that between 1990

and 1995 the average tuition fee for post-secondary education rose by 62%. The average student debt at graduation seems to have almost tripled since 1990. The Committee is asking Ottawa "What steps are being taken to ensure that post-secondary education remains equally accessible to all, regardless of income?"

Canada was scolded in the last review in 1993 for some of the same problems that are being asked now. The committee made several recommendations on how to fix these problems. But many people, who experience these problems first hand, know that now these issues are bigger than before. More and more who were in middle class homes are now looking towards the food banks to get food and clothing.

The UN committee will look at how the drastic changes in federal and provincial legislation over the past decade has reduced social rights and how these increased problems should be addressed. With Canada looking at the threat of dropping in international status these important issues should be dealt with. ♦

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights lists the basic rights that all people and governments have a responsibility to protect. The declaration was created in response to the horrors of World War II, and adopted by the UN on December 10th, 1948 to make sure that those kinds of abuses never happen again. Some of those declarations are:

- ▶ All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
- ▶ No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- ▶ Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
- ▶ Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment.
- ▶ Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- ▶ Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- ▶ Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
- ▶ Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
- ▶ Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

ONE AFTERNOON IN August I noticed an article in the paper informing me that Prime Minister Jean Chretien would be present at a special ceremony honouring his second cousin Rolland J. Boisvert. He was being honoured for his excellence as the founding trustee of the Sherwood Park Catholic school district from 1962 until his resignation in 1980. The special ceremony was to be held August 24th, 1998 at the Broadmoor Business centre in Sherwood Park.

It dawned on me that this would inevitably become an interesting story for my monthly column, John's Style File, that features interesting personalities who have an intellectual opinion on an array of inner city issues.

The following week I went out to the Broadmoor Business Centre. When I arrived, I noticed a small crowd of around fifty people standing around a canopy covered statue of what was obviously the sculptured bust of the P.M.'s cousin.

I found myself standing next to a tall clean cut business type, attired in a three piece suit. He had a wire headset signifying that he was secret service.

I introduced myself reaching out to shake his hand. "Hello. I'm with **Our Voice** Magazine. My name is John Zapantis."

He reached out to shake my hand. "Hi," he said.

I felt the urge to verify my status as a reporter so I quickly produced my **Our Voice** vendor's badge that I often use as a press pass.

"I'm a columnist here to interview the Prime Minister for my column on inner city issues."

He smiled warmly. "You may join the rest of the media." He pointed to the three TV journalists surrounded by camera people.

My heart pounded in appreciation. "Thank you," I replied.

There was a barricade dividing media members from the stage. I remained behind the lines of waiting media members.

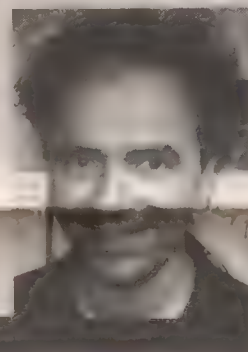
One camera man belonging to one of the three local TV stations glanced back at me quickly, then began talking to his partner.

The dialogue was loud enough for me to hear from where I stood.

"That guy over there reports for **Our Voice** and recently in a television interview he said that he uses poetry as a viable form of therapy and that it helps enhance his prospects as a poet and a working person. He's full of it. It's all B.S." They both laughed mockingly out



Our Voice writer John Zapantis goes for the Prime Minister



loud.

I realized the camera man was talking about me. My mind raced back to that moment when I made those comments when interviewed by the A-channel two months before at the Songs of the Street poetry book launch. I realized that the camera man was obviously envious of my accomplishments and credibility as a poet and a reporter.

Besides who else would he be talking about. I was the only inner city reporter there.

I was appalled by the judgmental camera man for slandered my credibility and integrity as a reputable reporter. I was now feeling this draconian urge to enforce some kind of harsh and aggressive justifiable action.

But I decided to bite the bullet and maintain my discretion so that I could open the doors of optimism when my turn came to interview the Prime Minister.

Then a conservatively dressed middle aged lady approached me cautiously.

"What are you doing here?" was her question.

"My name is John Zapantis. I'm a reporter for **Our Voice**. I have a monthly

column called "John's Style File." I'm here to interview the Prime Minister." I told her confidently.

I then put her to the challenge. "And who are you?"

The lady's expression changed to a look of cynicism and she produced an arrogant smile.

"I'm the Press Officer of the Prime Minister," she said. "You can't interview him here though, you can interview him at the official press scrum that'll be held at the Agricom. It starts in about forty-five minutes."

My mind went back to that obnoxious and slanderous camera man and for some reason I felt sure that he'd laid the bull on the lady about my "so called" antics as a reporter.

Well there was no point in awaiting the P.M.'s arrival. I used my time constructively so that I could make it on time for the press scrum. I hopped on the Sherwood Park bus and headed to the Agricom.

Sure enough, just as I had predicted, forty-five minutes later I arrived.

Within ten minutes the Prime Minister's limousine pulled up to the front entrance of the Agricom.

The Prime Minister got out and walked toward the crowd accompanied by his security personnel. He was greeted by loud applause and cheering from the partisan crowd.

My heart was pounding like pistons in a Camaro in overdrive as I noticed the tall, frail, charismatic Prime Minister and his entourage heading toward me. I waited with my camera poised.

I struggled through the crowd trying to get close enough to get some photos. Standing beside the P.M. was a secret service gentleman. I introduced myself. "I'm a reporter with **Our Voice**. I'm here for the media scrum."

He replied cooperatively. "Follow me. If you want an interview you'll have to be aggressive while making your way up to the front."

I paced with the secret service men and the P.M. I was losing my place while struggling to keep up with them. I started to quickly take a series of photos of the P.M. I was surrounded by the heavy crowd, which was literally all over the P.M. as he randomly shook hands.

After taking more than a dozen photos of the P.M. I realized that I had been caught off guard, caught up in my adrenalin filled enthusiasm of taking pictures.

A media scrum had formed more than fifty feet from where I was standing. I was now trapped behind a heavy wall of people. I had botched my opportunity to participate. I also realized that my plans to get an interview with the P.M. had failed. My obsessiveness with taking pictures was the inevitable factor that prevented me from staying on my toes.

As an excuse for failing to get the story, I momentarily reflected upon how that camera man had stymied my defences by making those uncalled for allegations about what he thought of my perspective on life as a poet. But despite failing to get my story, I managed to get a close up of the P.M. and a series of other photos.

The emotional scars the camera man embedded in me inevitably worked in his favour. What he doesn't realize though is that his ignorance alone enabled my emotional chords and enhanced my creative side.

I may not have got an interview with the P.M. and that may be considered a total failure as a reporter, but it still worked to my advantage. I can now say that in the name of **Our Voice**, as an established advocacy reporter, that I have chosen the proper forum, which guarantees me the incentive to explain my version of the story regardless of what may arise. ♦

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Collections

Some people collect cars
Some people collect coins
Some people collect phone numbers
Some people collect stamps
Some people collect cats
Some people collect jewelry
Some people collect ball caps
Some people collect records
Some people collect sports cards
Some people collect wine
Some people collect china

Me

I collect friends.
They're the most valuable of all.

by Perry Cardinal

Sitting in silence
and looking wise
isn't half as good
as drinking wine
and making a riotous shouting.

Otomo no Tabito

Pass Me By

Pass me by
with all your hatred and sorrow
Pass me by
as I hold out my hand for your pennies
Pass me by
as I long for your warm shelter
Pass me by
as you throw the old man into the cold
Pass me by
as my belly grows hungrier
Pass me by
as the dog gets beaten
Pass me by
as the addict brings a glass of rye to his mouth
Pass me by
as the officer's eyes turn away
Pass me by
when all the doctor can do is prescribe
Pass me by
as you stare at the colour of my skin

Just keep passing me by.

by Marie Murchie

Our Voice accepts poetry submissions, however what-
ever you send in will not be returned, please keep your
own copy.

Children from St. Richard School in Edmonton lent their talents to the world-wide Jubilee 2000 campaign. Joshua Fountain, (left) Kelsey Fountain, (centre) Sherrida Edwards, (back left) Charlene Ahurro, (back right) Myrasol Tekle, (right) Katie Doran (bottom).

Jubilee 2000

World-wide campaign to save children's lives

With brilliant costumes and brightly painted faces, the crowd of children from St. Richard School sat quietly on the wide staircase of Edmonton City Hall. They had just performed their "Lion King" show and now they listened while city and church leaders talked about cancelling global debt.

They were there on a sunny day in September as part of an international campaign to save the lives of children in developing countries.

"On the brink of the new millenium, we in the relatively rich north have created the scandalous reality that the poorest people on earth are shackled by a chain of unpayable debt which they had no hand in incurring," Bob Schmidt of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace told the children and crowd filling the City Hall atrium.

The ecumenical event was part of a campaign sponsored by the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, a grouping of more than 20 churches and inter-church organizations. World-wide the Jubilee 2000 campaign is assembling a global petition, perhaps the biggest one ever, to cancel the unpayable debt of the world's 50 most highly indebted poor countries.



"UNICEF estimates that \$9 billion invested in basic health, nutrition and sanitation could save the lives of 21 million children in sub-Saharan Africa, yet African countries cannot afford it because they pay \$13 billion in debt servicing payments each year," says a report on the campaign quoting South African Archbishop Ndungane, honorary chair of the worldwide drive.

Many Canadian organizations and churches are distributing the petition and information on Jubilee 2000. "We're really hoping people will take personal initiatives with their friends and family to circulate the petition," says Cathy Harvey of the Jubilee 2000 committee that is distributing packages on the initiative to any group or church that would be interested. For more information call Cathy Harvey at 463-3432. ♦

Photo and story Keith Wiley

NEWS OF THE WORLD

Send in the bizarre story!

Since *Our Voice* decided to discontinue Paul Sussman's *News of the World Column*, due to feedback received in our latest reader's survey, we have in turn fielded many calls from people distraught over our decision. "What about some humour in such a serious paper!" people say. Well we figure that we can bring some humour back to *Our Voice*, but we want you to write it. That's right. We are asking you, our loyal readers, to send in your own funny news stories; be they true or even slightly true with that obvious Paul Sussman embellishment, and if we feel they'll flush out some giggles from our readers, we'll print them. Our brave Editor has decided to get the ball rolling with his own story in hopes that many of you will follow with tales of your own. You can send them directly to us. Our address is on the inside of page 2. Good luck.

Muggers muddled by citizen's jar

Some brave and lucky citizens have made muggers the world over stand up and take notice.

In Victoria, Canada, ninety-two year old Florence Swayback was strolling home from the local market when a masked maunder maliciously emerged from behind a fence and grappled for control of her oversized handbag. Luckily in her other hand, Florence was carrying a bag containing a jar of prune juice she had just purchased minutes before. She swung the bag and cold cocked the disconcerted delinquent.

"I thought I killed the poor chap, but he managed to run off before I could hit him again," said the feisty old gal. "I broke my jar of prune juice, but I think all the excitement did me more good than the prunes. You know I could barely make it home on time."

In a similar story, Issac Boucher of St. Tropez, France had been washing his girlfriend's dishes when he inadvertently managed to get his hand stuck inside an empty salsa jar. On his way to the nearby medical clinic to have the jar removed, a man wearing a rubber mask jumped in his path and demanded all of his money.

"I was afraid at first, then I remembered the weapon I had stuck to my hand. I raised my glass paw and gave the rubbered ragamuffin a good one right in the melon. He went down and the jar broke, freeing my hand. I didn't even have to go all the way to the clinic." Issac proclaimed with great pride. "But the funny part of the whole thing is that I can't even eat Salsa. It gives me the runs like there's no tomorrow."

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JOHN'S STYLE FILE

Paul McGowan

John Zapantis
*Our Voice vendor, writer and
photographer meets the most
interesting people.*

Paul McGowan is a multi-talented guitar playing busker who has earned his lifetime free ticket to paradise.

"I like letting people hear my music and meeting new people and jamming with people on the street."

The young busker was strongly influenced by two mentors.

"I started playing guitar in grade 10, which was five years ago. My first influence was my Dad, because he plays guitar. My favorite band influence is the Grateful Dead."

Paul finds that hard work pays high and rewarding dividends. "I get better everyday. It really helps my confidence when people

smile and enjoy my music," says Paul.

Paul currently plays in an original three-piece rock band called "Knee Deep in Grass". Paul's sideline is busking and he may be found busking throughout the week along Whyte Avenue in Edmonton.

Our Voice asked Paul, "If you were elected Mayor of Edmonton, what new policies would you introduce to make conditions more convenient for buskers on Whyte Avenue?"

"The only thing I could see that would help busking a lot would be if they allowed electric amps on the street, because it's hard enough to hear guitars as it is." ♦

PART 3 (final) Canada's "squeegee kids" by Rodney Graham

Squeegee Kid Update from Winnipeg:

On May 1, 1998, Winnipeg City Hall (executive policy committee) voted, with the exception of one dissenting councilor, to "temporarily" ban squeegee kids. A few days earlier, Vancouver had enacted a by-law to prohibit squeegeeing. Vancouver mayor, Philip Owen, was quoted as naming the squeegee kids, "squeegee-pests."

Interestingly, attention has been drawn to watching Winnipeg because a task force of non-politicians (volunteers from community agencies -- fifty people in all) came back a month after the squeegee ban of May 1, and recommended licensing the squeegee kids. Although City Hall in Winnipeg had invited the task force, they are now dragging their heels. The human rights community in Winnipeg believes City Hall will try to veto the recommendation. The issue has been sent to administration and will not be dealt with until later in the year. In the meantime the kids have no work and have been alienated, unemployed, and criminalized.

Refugee Squeegee Kids Across Canada:

Flint, Mimi, Spike and Candy have been to Vancouver and have faced the same persecution that greeted them in Winnipeg. The four have returned to Montreal where it is still illegal. Many other desperate kids from across our nation have faced the same bias and have gone hungry for it. Hitchhiking from city to city, they long for a place to fit in, and to survive.

How the cities stacked up:

Montreal: Illegal: by-law.

Toronto: Negotiating "solution." Kids face harassment from police.

Winnipeg: Illegal: by-law. Task force recommended licensing. City Hall stalling on issue.

Regina: Not illegal: work lucrative. Few working. Not caught on yet.

Saskatoon: Not illegal: work lucrative. Not caught on. Few working.

Calgary: Virtually illegal: City using existing traffic laws.

Edmonton: Not illegal. Hasn't caught on with youth yet. Few kids working.

Vancouver: Illegal: by-law.



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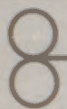
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Civic elections were slated for late October in Winnipeg. Squeegee kids and their supporters planned to nominate a squeegee kid to run for mayor.

This would give them the chance to voice their opinions in a situation where they feel they have been silenced. It will also be a humorous form of protest against what many view as an uncaring society.

Who knows? She or he might have won. As Mimi said before they left Winnipeg, "We'll be all right -- we have something to believe in." And when you have something to believe in, you always win." ♦



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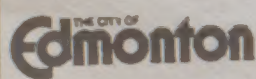
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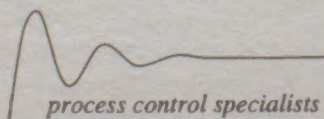
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IN EDMONTON

Donna Froese

BY JOHN ZAPANTIS

Donna Froese is a productive and dedicated **Our Voice** vendor. Donna discovered the popular advocacy read back in August of 1994.

She encountered an old friend who was vending **Our Voice**. He encouraged Donna on the idea of vending for additional income.

Donna appreciates the morally supportive customers who value her loyalty in return.

"A lot of people are helpful. They know we're out there trying. Like with me I don't push it. I stand there. If they want the magazine they know exactly where I am," she says.

Donna's grateful for the support she's received from buyers who make vending worthwhile.

"I appreciate it and I thank them all. It really helps."

Donna may be found selling **Our Voice** at any one of three locations in downtown Edmonton. Downstairs under the 100A Street west central L.R.T. station, 100A Street and Jasper Avenue and 108 Street and Jasper.

Eugene Graham

Eugene has been selling **Our Voice** since this past summer.

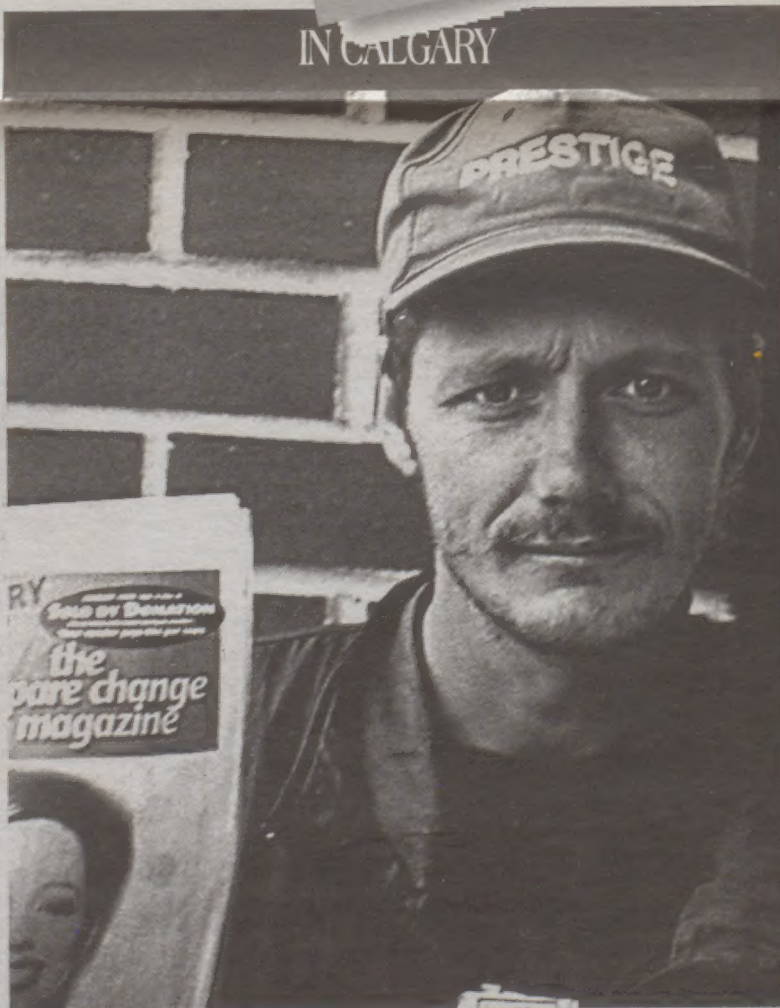
"The magazine gives me extra money to get by. It helps me work with people," Eugene says. "If it wasn't for the people I wouldn't be making any money. Selling **Our Voice** gets me a lot more respect than when I pan-handled."

You can find Eugene selling at the Safeway at 12th Avenue and 8th Street S.W. or on 8th Street under the 9th Avenue Bridge. ♦



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Riding a bike across Canada as a "hunter-gatherer"

Twenty three year old Owen Thomas had a personal mission. It was to ride his mountain bike all the way home to Hamilton when his studies ended last spring.

Owen has been studying Anthropology at the University of British Columbia for the past two years. He comes from an upper middle class family in Hamilton, Ontario where his dad is a surgeon.

Riding a bicycle across Canada is not anything new, but Owen conducted this trip to personally research some of what he learned at U.B.C. He wanted to live and travel across Canada as an "urban forager".

"In Anthropological terms I would be a hunter-gatherer," says Owen. "I want to see if a person can live without money."

He started his trip in May but didn't head east until mid-June.

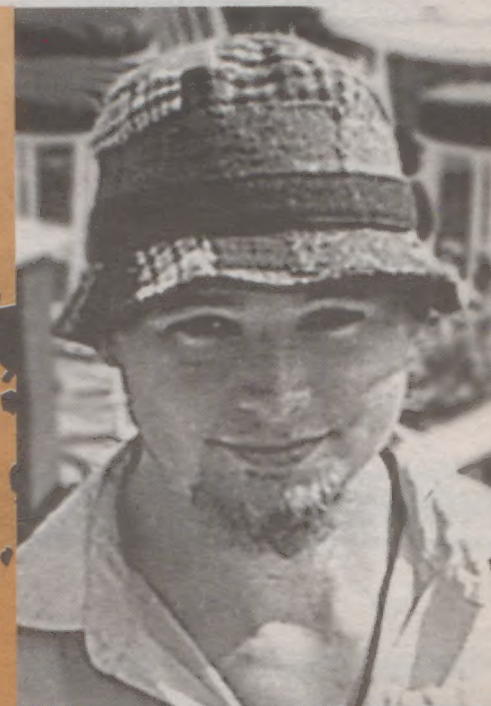
"I learned how to dumpster dive on Vancouver Island," he said. "Some provinces give return or deposits on bottles and cans (about ten cents each), so each one is worth something. After learning how to live with as little money as possible, I went to Vancouver and got involved in the protest against the ban on panhandlers and buskers. The police whacked some of us good with their nightsticks when we were trying to stage a peaceful demonstration. The protest tried to disrupt city council by holding a sit in on the floor of city hall in Vancouver."

Owen said the point of his trip was to live as a homeless person. He said he doesn't believe in the consumerism of society or in the direction it's heading.

"My dad was from a poor family," Owen says. Now he's a surgeon. He doesn't talk about money. In modern society, money is the main thing. In studying Anthropology I've realized that money is a recent thing in the history of mankind. I want to research how a person can live without it- it sounds crazy, but that's what I wanted to do. Money is a corrupt thing. The more money I have, the less money someone else has."

Owen's mission is reminiscent of Steinbeck's book, "Travels with Charlie", a book in which Steinbeck and his dog set out to find the heart of America and the heart of the ordinary person, while travelling by humble means.

"I'm learning more about politics, environmentalism and spirituality. I'm learning that they are related. The "life" story is not or should not be retrospective," says Owen. "Sleeping by the side of the road or in baseball diamonds has opened my eyes. I don't pay to stay at the usual campsites- it's perverse to have to pay to sleep under the stars," he continued. "The system is self serving and blind. If you comply with the system you can get U.I.C. for example, but if you don't comply, the system won't tolerate you. I want to see how mankind can survive without the system-without money. A good example of urban foragers are the bottle pickers and the squeegee kids."



Across Canada on \$3 a day

Owen Thomas "urban forages"

by Rodney Graham

"Did you know," says Owen, "that only four percent of all waste generated in Canada is recycled. Conversely in Japan, fifty percent is recycled. The ratio of bikes to autos worldwide is: in China 200 bikes-1 car, in India 30-1, in South Korea 20-1, in the Netherlands 25-1, in North America there are more cars than bikes at 0.7-1."

Owen left Vancouver in mid-June. "When I left, I had absolutely no money," he said. "Picking bottles and dumpster diving kept me fed and happy. In fact I found that I could live on three dollars a day, well actually a little more- like about three U.S. dollars a day."

A GRIZZLY BEAR

SEMI-TRAILER VACUUM

BOTTLE RETURNS

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FRIENDLY PEOPLE

He slept on roadsides with his fully camouflaged, army issue bivy sack and a complete bug screen. Owen said that his outfit kept his whereabouts concealed and that he could sleep undetected even in urban areas.

Travelling on the highways Owen often found semi-trailer trucks the most troublesome. "Trucks are terrifying-they will hurtle past you and the vacuum created will try to suck you under the trailer," he said. "This was especially alarming riding through the mountain passes," he related. "The choices between a 1400 metre drop and the wheels of a semi-truck are not too appealing."

However the fresh mountain air and the usual occurrence of the northern lights was a nice treat for

Owen as he slept by the roadside during his few days journey through the mountains and into Banff, Alberta.

"When I arrived in Banff I had the best night's sleep I ever had," said Owen.

Shortly after breaking camp and packing his bike, a park ranger told Owen that a grizzly bear was approaching. The ranger shielded Owen with his van as he rode down the road and out of the area. He later learned that the bear had slept very near his camp. He also discovered that grizzlies don't like bikes, in fact they have been known to charge them!

In Calgary, Owen found good fare. Dumpster diving was fruitful and he slept in a local park in the downtown area. He said the drivers were a might scarier though.

Camping out near Drumheller, Alberta, Owen was pleased to find a treasure trove in the garbage cans around the tourist spots. "I slept in a teepee, meant only for display," he said. The next night he slept under the stars surrounded by dinosaur statues. He collected an average of eight dollars a day in pop bottles in the few days he spent there. Travelling east from Drumheller, Owen found it easier going than in B.C. He used side roads to avoid traffic. He slept in farmer's fields where he was easily sheltered.

"The people I met were generally friendly, if they weren't police or business people. In B.C. a young couple gave me pancakes when they saw me sleeping in the ditch. In Alberta the ranger was very helpful and near the Saskatchewan, Manitoba border some religious people gave me chinese food and scrambled eggs for breakfast when they met me on the side of the road. I think people saw my packsack and that I was young and just wanted to help out."

"Even though I was poorer than I've ever been in my life, I felt wealthier than I'd ever been," Owen said.

"But even though this was a good adventure and was very educational, it's not something I'd want to do year round. Admittedly it's quite stressful." ♦